

Cultural Memory and Psychosocial Narratives: Remembering 1968

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ABSTRACT *Through reflecting back on the political imaginations and urgencies that informed an engagement with 1968 I share some of the promise and the difficulties in relating the personal to the political. I show the appeal of a certain kind of class politics but also the silences and suppressions that it can create through its tacit universalism, which involves, with Marx, a transcendence of differences. Through exploring the cultural memories of a political moment I argue for the importance of learning from these social inventions and experiments for ways of living differently in the present and for revising a notion of democratic politics. Learning to listen to ourselves in our differences, but also to others in what we share, I argue for shaping different kinds of psychosocial narratives that can bring thinking across the boundaries of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. I argue for embodying identities in ways that do not fix people into pre-given categories but allow for a fluidity that grants a sense of equal respect and equal voice as we shape multicultural psychotherapies that can learn from the cultural memories of the past as we learn to engage with different layers of experience. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

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RE/MEMBERING 1968

When we are stimulated by an anniversary to reflect back 40 years to the ‘events’ of 1968, we are tracking across our own lives and attempting to reconnect through memory with our own experiences as young adults. We might wonder where all those years have gone as we recognize how our personal and collective experiences in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which were times of intense engagements with shaping new political and psychic imaginations, have somehow emerged in the twenty-first century as historical objects of study. This calls forth reflections on changing political languages and discourses, which can seem to make our own histories strangely inaccessible as they are reflected back to us. Memories can be evoked across time as we have to deal emotionally with the passing of time and the selective nature of our own memories. We are drawing connections across time and this can foster cultural memories shaped by a particular forms of psychosocial

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narrative. Sometimes this involves learning how to think across the boundaries of the personal and the political in ways that can question post-structuralist orthodoxies as we learn to re-evaluate the social experiments that were part of the living politics of the time.

In Seidler (1991a) I traced genealogies of the living politics and the different political imaginations that emerged at the time, which were partly influenced by situationist writings. I tried to show how issues of class, gender, sexualities, 'race' and ethnicities were emerging into dialogue with each other through a new awareness of consumer culture, media and 'society of the spectacle', through the diverse social experiments that were shaping different ways of living and forms of being. Some of these lost strands of libertarian socialist politics seem to be finding a resonance within a younger generation in the present. For a sense of the excitements stimulated by situationist writings see Vaneigem (2010).

I was a student between 1964 and 1967 at Oxford, which was a relatively quiet time in student politics on the left. I recall the influence and friendship of American post-graduate students at St Catherines College who were confronting issues around the draft for the Vietnam War. There was a sense of the seriousness of the situations they potentially faced and so there was a vital connection between ethics and politics, decisions they might need to make as individuals and the larger structures of global power and war. As we watched the Vietnam War developing and the seeds of the anti-war movement, there were issues emerging about the 'relevance' of what we were learning. A generation was being ethically challenged to break with traditional liberal traditions and to rethink relations between ethics and politics and their own positions within global relations of power and violence.

There were new critiques of disciplinary knowledges within higher education, which seemed to compartmentalize knowledge and life in ways that made it difficult to reflect theoretically upon the moral and political issues we were beginning to face as a generation. New questions were being shaped as we felt a need to relate differently to established intellectual and political traditions. There was a questioning of the authority of knowledge and a sense that we needed to engage with the political world in new ways. A sense of the politics of everyday life informed new political imaginations that sought to move across the boundaries of the personal and the political, interests and knowledge, emotions and power.

I was a postgraduate student in sociology at Kent watching the scenes of street protest unfold in Paris in May 1968 and absorbed in the speed with which the student rebellion was able to connect with a larger worker's movement to destabilize state power. De Gaulle had gone into hiding and, for a while at least, students and workers had taken power on the streets. There was a closeness between Kent and Paris with some postgraduate students returning to give us a feel of what was happening on the streets. There was also anger at the complicities of the Labour government with the United States in Vietnam and it was a visit by George Brown to Kent that was the occasion for one of the first student movements. We occupied the university administration and felt a sense of connection with movements that seemed to be happening around the world. There was a sense of student power and an attempt to question the relationship between the universities as spaces of critical thinking and the administration of state power. There was excitement in the air and with the media focus upon events there was a sense that radical change and transformation of lives was possible.

As I recall some of these events I can feel a sense of excitement and hopefulness. As students we felt empowered and with the media attention we could feel that somehow we

were at the 'centre' of things, especially as we identified with the protest movements against the Vietnam War in Grosvenor Square, London, and with those gathered in Chicago outside the Democratic Convention. If we took certain personal risks, these were slight in relation to those young Americans of our generation who had actually been conscripted to fight in Vietnam. There was a willingness to identify with the North Vietnamese in their struggles against United States imperial power and we read reports of trips made by Susan Sontag, Jane Fonda and others.

Though there are definite resonances with the present and particularly with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are also significant differences in the anti-war movements. There are attempts to frame the resistance movements that are struggling against the occupation as anti-imperialist and so as somehow deserving our support. But this is to misunderstand the nature of Islamic fundamentalism and the kind of challenge that it presents to Western democracies and to resort too easily to notions of 'anti-imperialism' even though control over oil resources, particularly in Iraq, remain a vital aspect of imperialism. It is the failings on the left to frame a language and theory that can articulate present global conflicts that can be fed by a nostalgia for 1968, where the battle lines seemed so much clearer and the moral choices so much more evident at least in memory.

Of course we re/member the past in different ways and it can be tempting to think that we still need to 'mourn' a revolution that did not happen. It has been in talking with friends more sympathetic to this notion that I have had to rethink my own resistance to it and wonder about the sources of my own denials. There is a disappointment that we carry, possibly as a generation, about how things turned out, particularly after Thatcher took power with the Conservatives. Somehow she was able to take the moral initiative in Britain at a crucial moment and some of her appeals to freedom as individual choice, for example in relation to the right of working-class people to purchase their own council houses, caught the imagination. Why should they be deprived of possibilities that middle-class families could often take for granted to provide an inheritance for their children? Somehow she was able to appropriate a discourse of freedom that had been associated with 'liberation' in the late 1960s while attacking the 'permissiveness' of the times and also blaming feminism for undermining traditional relationships of authority. She did her best to reinstate traditional 'family values', so attacking the advances made by gay liberation and its challenges to hetero-normative relationships. The mood of the country had also changed with the economic crisis of the late 1970s (see, for example, Hall, 1984).

DISAPPOINTMENTS

When we think back to our own political engagements in the early 1970s we can recall the differences that existed in different parts of the left and the different responses to the women's movement and gay liberation. Often these differences are forgotten when we focus upon the 1960s as some kind of shared inheritance. Though in France there was a challenge to state power that fostered talk of revolution, in the UK it was more to do with a youth rebellion against the bourgeois relationships in our families. If we talked about ourselves as 'revolutionaries' there was an ambivalence in the rhetoric of the libertarian left that was more focused upon 'a revolution of everyday life' and so a transformation of experience.

Although it can be difficult to recall, there was a critique of the ‘unreality’ of everyday experience as it was framed in the famous gathering in the Roundhouse, Chalk Farm, in the summer of 1967. Titled ‘Dialectics of Liberation’, it brought together speakers such as Herbert Marcuse, Stokeley Carmichael, Ronald Laing, Jules Henry and poets like Alan Ginsburg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. I remember attending a number of talks and going off to Marine Ices every so often. There was an intellectual excitement in the air – a sense that we had to rethink institutions and the ways they were structured in oppressive ways. It was about schooling and university education as well as psychiatry and mental illness. It was about the oppressive nature of work in capitalist societies, which made people disposable to the needs of capital, and it was about oppressive relationships within families. There was a critique of professionalization and expertise that served to construct people as the ‘objects’ of scientific discourses. There were challenges to the compartmentalization of knowledge and an awareness of how the universities were often organized to meet corporate interests. (For a taste of the atmosphere, see, for example, Marcuse, 1955, 1972; Cooper, 1968; Brown, 1968; Laing, 1965; Dinnerstein, 1976; Lasch, 1977.)

It is difficult to recall some of these discussions without a sense of nostalgia for the connections that were being made and for the aliveness of the intellectual exchanges. But there can be a positive nostalgia that can serve as a reminder of the importance of imagination and risk. Some of these ideas were appropriated and refigured to serve a Thatcherite purpose but they remained a challenge and a provocation to future generations. For a younger generation, who had grown up with Thatcherism and been educated in the 1970s and 1980s in British universities, there was a turn towards a re-engagement with Marxism as a science of history and politics through Althusser and a structuralism that was to mutate into a post-structuralism that could be more easily accommodated to the university. (For a critical discussion of the impact of Althusser on the shaping of new post-structuralist political imaginations and the disdain for the personal and emotional that had been encoded in their critiques of humanism see, for instance, Clarke et al., 1980; Rowbotham, 1983; Connell, 1987; Rutherford, 1990; Seidler, 2010.) In part this defined itself against the ‘false hopes’ of 1968 and its moralism and assumed sense of certainty, as if, as a generation, we had assumed the confidence to legislate what was good, not only for ourselves but also for others. It was the self-belief of this earlier generation that a later generation often found difficult to take. It could seem like an arrogance and a refusal to listen – a sense that we know best and that if you want to do things differently then this has to reflect a ‘falling away’ of the political dreams.

But if the dreams of 1968 were to fail and we were forced to recognize the appropriation of some of its libertarian ideals within the New Right that framed its own version of market libertarianism, there is still a responsibility to remember for the present and to recall the hopes that were alive across the globe. For as a generation we lived with hopes that the world could be transformed and made into something more equal and human. But there were also a lot of casualties as the world changed and Thatcher took power in the UK and Reagan in the US and many people lost a sense of their bearings and died through suicide or substance abuse. Groups that had supported each other fragmented and people took refuge in whatever occupations they could find.

I was lucky to find my way back into academic work in the university and many friends found a career through training in different psychotherapies and psychoanalytic trainings.

There were tacit knowledges and personal skills that they had developed through their years of political organizing and community work that were somehow valued within these diverse 'helping professions'. Many people also became social and community workers hoping that in working with local communities they could realize some of their dreams for greater social justice. They sought to empower the poor and the dispossessed and to create more equal ways of working that challenged the traditional hierarchies of professions.

But as the world seemed to change so quickly there was also a sense of shock that things had not turned out in the ways we had hoped. Working with the Big Flame political group in East London and involved in various industrial projects around the Ford plant in Dagenham and community projects in the East End, we shared a sense of connection between the 'personal' and the 'political', between the 'psyche' and the 'social' and between transforming our own lives and engaging in processes of social change to challenge capitalist social relationships. We sought to create counter-cultures, for instance in the ways we worked together with workers we met from the Dagenham plant. We wanted to be more equal in our relationships and so challenge Leninist ideas of militancy and leadership. We had as much to learn from the workers we were engaging with as we had to teach. We questioned the Leninist idea that somehow we were to bring Marxist theory to bear upon their limited class experience that could not extend beyond a 'trade-unionist' consciousness. Informed by Italian Marxist ideas that had been developed in Turin out of the struggles in the Fiat factory we recognized connections between the factory and the city and the need for people to 'struggle in different areas of their lives'. This engagement with traditions of Italian Marxism also involved questioning the dominant post-structuralist readings of Gramsci that were circulating at the time and so reading Gramsci in ways that recognized his changing relationship to Leninism as well as the more personal openings that could be witnessed in his letters (Gramsci 1971, 1975). For a sustained engagement with different readings of Gramsci see Seidler (1995).

For a while, at least, there was a sense that history was moving in our direction and that it was just a matter of time before a revolutionary challenge to capitalism was established. Informed by Gramsci we recognized that we needed to question the hegemony of capitalist ideas and relationships and so bring into question the legitimacy of established institutions. So we appreciated that power was not simply centralized in the state so that the aim of politics was a challenge to 'state power' but that power was being exercised in different spheres and institutions that stretched from the control of minds within psychiatry and mental institutions and the control of bodies as they become framed as 'objects' of a medical discourse to the disciplining of minds and bodies in education and universities as well as in places of work. This partly explains the resonance between Laing's work in anti-psychiatry and Foucault's early work, which Laing helped to get published in Britain. (For some helpful discussions of the development of Laing's work see, for instance, Collier, 1977; Jacoby, 1977; Sedgwick, 1982; Turkle, 1978.) There was Foucault's larger critique in *Madness and Civilization* (1971; see also Foucault, 1975, 1990, and Kritzman, 1991), which helped to broaden the economism and focus upon class relationships that had been so much part of a Marxist inheritance. Foucault helped to bring attention to the structures and institutions of modernity and so contextualize the development of capitalism and the particular focus that had been framed on the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

NEW CAPITALISM AND EMBODIED LIVES

As capitalism proved itself capable of reinstating and modernizing itself in global terms, it became difficult to think about capitalism as a social, economic and cultural system. With the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1998 it became easier to feel that Marxism had somehow been disproved and that there was no alternative to market capitalism. It became important to rethink critiques of capitalism and become much clearer about the forms of inequality, injustice and oppression that it framed. The insights of 1968 lay in its recognition that capitalism was more than an economic system or a mode of production that shaped others aspects of life as relationships between human beings became framed instrumentally as relationships between things, but that it also shaped a particular cultural imaginary and sense of value and life.

Marx had been clear that exploitation was not simply a matter of surplus value and those who controlled it but that it has to do with the ways in which use values were subsumed through the categories of exchange value. The value of something was to be established on the market through what people were prepared to pay as its exchange value. Everything literally had a price and it was a matter of allowing markets to establish what that price should be. For free-market libertarians this was partly a matter of making visible what was so often concealed and so making institutions accountable through making their diverse costs legible. For many this is the benefit of market relations and partly legitimates, within a neo-conservative ideology sustained through the years of New Labour, the spread of market relations and privatization to different spheres of life. But this shaped a new psychic imagination within a globalized new capitalism where individuals were encouraged to focus upon their own lives and the social ceased to exist for them.

But it was vital for Marx to recognize that labour could not be treated as a commodity like any other good whose 'value' could somehow be established impartially on the labour market. The part of Marx's critique of capitalism that became so influential around 1968 was that articulated in his early Paris manuscripts. It was framed through his understanding of alienated labour arising from the material relations that separated workers from the means of production that were owned and controlled by capitalists. If workers were free to decide on what company they were prepared to work for, they were still obliged within a capitalist society to sell their labour and so to treat their skills and abilities as if they were commodities, somehow separated from themselves.

As we worked as part of the Big Flame revolutionary group around the Ford plant at Dagenham in the early 1970s we were struggling against the routines of the assembly lines that obliged workers to submit to time-and-motion studies that regulated and controlled their work. This framed a somatic politics of the disciplining and regulation of bodies. Their jobs had been timed and they were expected to meet the targets that had been set for them. They had to submit their bodies to the rhythm of the assembly line and so keep up with the pace that had been set. At the time there were issues around mobility and so whether workers could have distinct jobs and a certain amount of security in relation to where they worked or whether they could be moved around at will according to the daily needs of production. There was a resistance to casualization, which was associated with the indignities of an earlier generation of workers in, for instance, the docks. (For some reflections upon the changing nature of the labour process and how it worked to establish particular

routines of discipline and control see, for instance, Weil, 1958; Braverman, 1974; Levidow and Young, 1981, 1984; Blum and Seidler, 1989, Chapter 6.)

At the Ford group we learned that struggles around work had to do with much more than wages and what people were being paid. There were echoes in the struggles against mobility with Marx's insights into the struggle against wage labour itself. The point is that, as workers, people had a certain level of power because of the trade unions but there was often a distrust of trade unions, which seemed to have their own interests, and there was a growth in unofficial shop-steward movements and self-organized workers groups, who were able to articulate different kinds of grievances that went beyond the traditional terms of wage bargaining. As activists we used to spend hours hanging around local pubs and talking to workers we knew so as to be able to establish what was going on in different parts of the plant. In producing leaflets we were serving to spread communications between different parts of the plant and so establish connections that often went outside traditional trade-union channels. Many workers saw the official trade unions as part of the management structure and so as part of the disciplinary machinery. We became skilled at 'reading' what was going on in different parts of the plant. We were informed by theories of the labour process and so sensitive to the changing organization of work and technologies that were, in part at least, responses by capital to sustain control over the labour process. In this sense technologies were not 'neutral' but were shaped through what we understood as class struggle.

We were also sceptical about traditional notions of 'workers' control' when this meant the incorporation of workers organizations into managerial structures, as had been developed in Germany; we were more concerned with empowering forms of independent workers' organisations at work. There was a leading idea about democracy not as a form of representative governance but as fostering the autonomy of people to make decisions for themselves in the different parts of their lives. There was a critique of bureaucracy and the administration of everyday life that had shaped the institutions of the Welfare State in Britain.

As Hilary Wainright explored in her talk to the 'Psychotherapy and Liberation' May 1968 Anniversary Conference held at the Institute of Group Analysis on 2–4 May 2008, this had occurred through a Fabian tradition that assumed that an educated class 'knew what was best' for others who could not really legislate for themselves. This was part of a paternalistic tradition of social reform where the expertise lies in the hands of 'educated authorities' who could legislate 'the good' for others. It was through research and social investigation that they could acquire knowledge of the conditions of working-class life and so be able to provide what the poor needed to 'improve' themselves. The material poverty and hunger that still characterized pre-war working class life and the shocking housing conditions in which people were forced to live were the proper targets of social reform. In many ways it was obvious what needed to be done to help children and families out of terrible poverty.

But with the transformations in housing that were achieved in the post-war world and the shift in class relations that for a time at least allowed for social mobility there was a shift in traditional class relationships. With mass communications and new media there was a spread of sources of information. This was to be again transformed with the Internet. These new forms of communication subverted traditional relationships of authority and deference, and this became visible in a multicultural Britain in the scenes that emerged at the funeral of Diana. There were calls for a newly democratic politics that New Labour was able to

articulate for a brief moment before affirming its commitment to a continuation of Thatcher's market liberalism and the centralization of state authority, which undermined its avowed affirmation of a civil rights agenda. The events of 9/11 and the London bombings in 2005 transformed the political landscape and the alliance that Blair made with Bush, which saw the attacks on Afghanistan and later Iraq as part of what was framed as a global 'war against terror', worked to undermine traditional civil liberties in Britain and further tightened state control. (To explore the impact of the bombings of 7 July 2005 and the challenges that it made to conceptions of a multicultural and multifaith Britain see, for instance, Abbas, 2007 and Seidler, 2008a.) In the end New Labour proved incapable of articulating a new democratic agenda of equal citizenship and empowerment. As traditional authorities were coming to be questioned within mainstream politics there were calls for new forms of democratic citizenship. These only intensified with the global financial crisis in 2008 and the scandals surrounding MP's payments, which served to undermine the legitimacy of traditional politics.

IMAGINATIONS

The Welfare State and the expansions of higher education that it made possible were to provide the opportunities for the generation of 1968 to question the forms and terms in which the Welfare State was being organized. There was a democratic imagination that sought to liberate the routines of everyday life and so offer a sense of freedom and exploration that was not imaginable in the post-war years. It was because, as a generation, we had grown up to be empowered with some money as 'teenagers' through a new musical culture that through the Beatles and the Stones was to have global resonance, that it was easy to feel that we were somehow 'at the centre of things'. In the anti-war movement there was a challenge to traditional cultures of authority and deference that had marked Britain as a class society. We had grown up through Macmillan's winds of change and the decolonization of African states. There was a language of freedom as self-determination that became part of the currency even within Conservative Britain. There was a widespread sense, that like nations, people should have control over their own lives. This reflected itself in humanistic movements within psychotherapy that promised more equal therapeutic relationships.

The anti-colonial movement that had developed over decades had questioned the legitimization of colonial rule. This was a revolutionary transformation for a generation of children who had grown up to identify a sense of superiority with the vast pink areas on the maps. Geography as a discipline sat at the heart of our schooling because it had traditionally embodied a sense of white and European superiority. We had also grown up in the 1960s with mass immigration from the Commonwealth, particularly from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent, which meant that the cities at least were to become more culturally and racially diverse. There were the Notting Hill riots in 1958 that showed the tension within 'race relations' and with Powell Speech about the 'rivers of blood' in 1968 and the marches of the dockers into central London in support of Powell, there was a sense of the complexities of relationships between class and race. But at the time, especially with a widespread rediscovery of Marx, there was a tendency to assume that issues of race would be solved through issues of class. Possibly this helps to explain how issues around race and ethnicity

tended to be taken for granted within the 1968 movement, although there were specific identifications with the civil rights movement in the US and the writings of Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson and the Black Panthers. In writings around 1968 and the politics that emerged out of the student movement it is often forgotten how significant were issues of race and ethnicity. The writings that travelled across from the United States placed the civil rights movement at the centre of emerging political imaginations and it was partly through issues of Black consciousness that issues around women's liberation were also inspired. For some helpful reflections on these early days of the women's movement see, for instance, Rowbotham (1973, 1983).

Though as a group we decided to move to east London through a vague identification of some of us with the Jewish anarchist tradition that had recently been written about by Bill Fishman, there was a willingness to accept Marx's notions in 'The Jewish question' that a politics that was 'human' had to transcend issues of 'race', ethnicity and religion. (For an account of the historical movements around Jewish anarchism and the influence they had in a multicultural east London and the ways they existed as part of a transnational movement that stretched across national boundaries and so traditions of national historiography see Fishman, 1980.) In its readiness to move beyond the recognition of differences and somehow imagine others as equals with equal dignity and respect, 1968 remains in vital aspects at least, part of an Enlightenment project. It shared in the revolutionary traditions that had emerged out of an Enlightenment humanism that, in Kantian terms, accepted histories and cultures as forms of unfreedom and determination. They would lead us astray if we dwelt upon these differences that would gradually disappear in their significance.

This was still being voiced through a tradition of 'socialist humanism' that was being reasserted in the Prague Spring and in the oppositional writings in Eastern Europe.

But the political imaginations of 1968 were also experimental in that we were inventing new ways of living and so attempting to learn from our own experience. We were prepared to put our bodies on the line – which was the language of the time. It applied in relation to political demonstrations in which we were to test the resolve of the police, who were not seen as impartial but very much, at that time, as the agents of state power and so colluding with the oppressive nature of the state. It also applied in relation to ways of everyday living. At some level there was a democratization of everyday life and a questioning of traditional relationships of authority, power and deference. It was through satire and humour that traditional authorities were to be mocked. By making them look ridiculous, the power of humour was quite central to the politics of the times. There was the right to hold traditional authorities to account and so question what for so long was considered to be beyond questioning. This was part of a culture of social *invention* and *experimentation* that still needs to be explored for what it can teach the present.

Teachers could not assume their own authority but had to somehow prove not only their knowledge but also their moral capacities to teach. There was a democratization of voice that was central to the spirit of 1968 and which implied that people had an 'equal voice' and an equal right to be listened to. There was a *politics of listening* that spread out from the student movement into a critique of the administration of everyday lives and the ways power worked in institutions to silence those they were supposedly set up to serve. If there was a spirit of rebellion it was also informed by a sense of joy and hope. There was a living sense of Benjamin's *jetzzeit* – now time- a sense that transformations could be made in

the present – now. (For an illuminating discussions of Walter Benjamin's early work and how it was theoretically informed see Caygill, 1998.)

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND FUTURE HOPES

There was a widespread questioning of linear time and the identifications that a liberal society made between history, freedom and progress. There was the shaping of an alternative imagination that said that change was possible in the here and now and that it was important to become attentive to what was happening in the present. Life would soon pass us by if we somehow failed to *attend to* the present and simply saw the present as a moment in the transition from the past to the future. It was the possibilities that were locked into the present that needed to be released. For some people this meant 'slowing down' and somehow attending to the present. This meant a different kind of politics of becoming that involved an attention to the present and an awareness of the possibilities of openings. There was a belief in the potentialities of the present and a sense that there was no method that could be systematically followed that might unlock them. Rather we had to be patient and somehow prepared for what would somehow become possible.

Why is it still so difficult to stay in the present? This was part of the challenge that Fritz Perles' Gestalt psychotherapy was to make to Freud. The present was not simply to give us access to a childhood past where we might find the causes of distress locked into our personal and familial histories but carried its own resonances. The present could lead us to make different kinds of connections with the past but also with possible futures and diverse connections in the present. These were part of expressive therapies that recognized that people could move into different spaces with themselves if they were allowed to *express* what was upsetting or distressing them in the present. This helped to shape the early years of the human potential or growth movement that was to frame humanistic traditions within psychotherapy. (For a helpful introduction to Gestalt psychotherapy and the ways it emerged with Fritz Perles' break with traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, and other significant traditions of work within humanistic psychotherapy, see, for instance, Rogers, 1961; Perls, 1969, 1976; Rowan, 2010.)

There was a move towards post-analytic traditions that could value what they had to offer while at the same time recognizing how often they locked people back into their regressed childhood experiences and made it difficult for them to *make connections* with changing behaviours in the present. At some level there was within classical Freudian analysis as it had developed often an inherited suspicion of 'acting out' in any way that might interfere with the transference that had been tacitly granted a kind of sacred status. Emotional conflicts and present actions were often regarded as pathways back into childhood experiences that were assumed to have a causal status so shaping behaviours in the present as often being traditionally regarded as modes of 'acting out'. Of course, there are numerous instances where people 'act out' and so move into actions as a way of avoiding or controlling uncomfortable feelings that might be emerging but we have to be wary not to generalize and recognize that emotions, thoughts, behaviours and feelings needed to find their context in individual lives.

But there is a danger that analysts can lock themselves into an interpretative mode that somehow removes and disengages them from their own experience, especially when they

have completed their own training analysis. Rather than learn how to take responsibility for their own emotions and so do the 'emotional work' they need to do for themselves it becomes easy for them to use their position as analysts to project their 'unfinished business' onto others. Though humanistic traditions might be less sophisticated theoretically and less attuned to the complexities of unconscious life – or even suspicious of them – they can be more aware of how easy it is for people with a certain degree of power and authorities, like group leaders within group analysis, to dump upon people in their own groups. Of course each analytic and post-analytic tradition comes with its own possibilities and dangers. Group analysts can be so used to their own positions of authority while at the same time disavowing them through identifying themselves as 'conductors' of small or large groups, that it can be difficult for them to be equal participants in groups themselves. Rather they can be so used to positioning themselves in a 'position from nowhere' that they become identified with their own interpretations of group process. It is as if they can be in danger of ceasing to exist for themselves.

This touches upon issues within group processes themselves, for although tight boundaries are held around the organization of groups within the groups themselves that supposedly reveal unconscious and thereby chaotic processes, it can be tempting to merge and so difficult to sustain your own boundaries. There seems to be a relationship between the over-bounded notions that attach to the group and its structure, even down to the organization of the chairs and the under-bounded identifications that can so easily take place within groups themselves. Even though group analysts are supposed to continue with their own therapy and so work on their own emotional issues, I have experienced how unresolved issues, say in large group situations – can so easily spill into other contexts where they are not appropriate. There can be a sense of intellectual complexity in relation to inner emotional life that can be limiting to the extent of becoming a form of suffocation. It is as if the clarity that people might reach individually, especially when offering interpretations of others, can reveal an inner loneliness and insecurity that they find hard to work with themselves. (For some helpful discussion around different kinds of group work see, for example, Blumberg, 1983; Samuels, 1989.)

This itself was a danger partly recognized in the imagination of 1968 and its suspicion of authority structures. Unless people learn to 'deal with their own shit' they are bound to pass it on to others. This is an insight that Simone Weil had about the working of authority in the factory in which workers are obliged to swallow the insults of their foreman because to react with the anger, they feel, puts their jobs in danger. Often it becomes displaced on partners and children in the family. This is demonstrated in Godard's *No.2* where he shows how a male worker comes home full of the frustrations of work and unable to release them himself, he passes them on in the brutality of his fucking. There is no tenderness in his sexual contact and no real meeting. (Issues in relation to men, bodies and emotional life and how these are framed differently across time and culture have been explored in Seidler, 2000a, 2007.)

With the moves towards professionalization that have marked Western industrial societies since the 1980s there has been a move towards more traditional psychoanalytic training. Rather than engage in a process of their own development and growth there is a tendency for young people to think of training as the acquiring of skills that they can sell on the market. There is a different kind of motivation, partly enforced by living within very

different social worlds, where new capitalism has been able to re-assert itself. The idea that ‘the personal is political’ has a very different currency and it is easy to think of therapy as a profession like any other. This is why there is such an intense discussion around state registration because people know that it will change their nature of the profession. It is also that those who turned towards therapy partly as a place of refuge in the face of the losses of the 1960s are now reaching retirement and they are sensing that whatever legacy they have offered is likely to disappear in these new forms of state regulation.

But it is often unhelpful to be nostalgic, although it can be vital to remember and recall the politics of everyday life and the resonances so much of these ideas continue to have in the present. In the human sciences and philosophy there has been a rediscovery of ideas of the late 1960s and 1970s and the development of intellectual critiques, for example through Deleuze and Guattari (1977), which echo those times. The influence of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari has helped to bring ideas of flow and liminal existences into the currencies of social and cultural theory, although often through its own languages, which can be difficult for some to engage with and which can be difficult to translate. But if the links between, say, Guattari and Laing were grounded in clinical experience so there was a conversation between theory and experience, there has been a displacement of experience as a discursive category within these post-modern theories. There is a sense that languages can shape their own experiences and that there is a radical dislocation between social theories developed in the North and their lack of ‘traction’ in the South where people are looking for new terms in which to illuminate and shape their own histories and cultures. But we can overstate these categorical distinctions if we appreciate how often theories developed in the North are circulating widely in the South. Within an increasingly globalized world these distinctions between ‘North’ and ‘South’ or between the West and the non-West need to be reframed. But unless there is trust in relationships there cannot be the dialogue that allows such communications to develop across differences and so to engage critically with Western epistemological traditions that frame themselves in universal terms.

DIFFERENCE/S

Of course people can remember very different 1968s and know that this inheritance has been passed on to them, if at all, in quite different ways. Putting aside the resentments later generations can experience, some feel that they want to understand the hopes attached to that historical moment because they felt as ‘Thatcher’s children’ they had grown up in a time of continual defeat and very little hope. They feel that are living in a world in which many people have lost a sense that the social world can be transformed so that the best you can do is to ensure that your own life is lived as well as possible. For some this means material wellbeing while for many others this means engaging in personal terms with changing whatever needs to be changed in the world around them. They do not believe in revolutionary change and find it hard that an older generation could ever have shared such illusions. But possibly it is a vocabulary and experience of hope that 1968 can still offer to the present.

But there is also the work of mourning that still needs to be done for the hopes of 1968, even if the cultural imaginations might still resonate in the present. I sense that my own difficulties of mourning these times, which is also to mourn the passing of my own youth,

are tied up with the universalism that was imagined at that time. Somehow it kept me on the margins for it was only through thinking on the margins that the tensions with this universalism could be sustained. At some level the transcendence of difference was part of what I wanted and welcomed because it allowed an escape from history and, for me, an escape from the mourning I still had to do for my family and the many individuals and families who had been murdered and destroyed during the Holocaust. I have reflected on these changes in my own thinking and on the need to question a tradition of Enlightenment rationalism that tacitly inherited a universalism framed within the terms of a dominant secularized Christianity while talking in a secular language (see Seidler, 2000b; it is also a theme in Seidler, 2008b).

It was through the universalism offered by 'class politics' which was somehow able to reassert itself in the early 1970s when the understandings of gender and sexuality, the women's movement and gay liberation – had somehow been absorbed into the re-arrangements and practices in the present. Somehow in *Big Flame* we felt that these insights had been made our own and that in the sexual politics we were developing we were already transforming traditional notions of 'class politics'. Within the assumptions of the libertarian left there were anarchist strains and a willingness to bring different kinds of struggles, including against racism, into the larger arena of 'the political'. Rather than being a specific sphere, this became an inclusive category of liberation.

Even though I would return from Mile End in the East End to celebrate certain Jewish festivals with my family, there was an awareness that I was living a very different kind of life with very different priorities. As an identity, Jewishness was incidental, somehow 'transcended' in the 'human struggles' we were engaging with politically. Even though we might talk about the struggles against racism we would barely talk about anti-Semitism or the movements that were taking place in the Soviet Union against the oppression of Jews who wanted to leave for Israel. We felt uneasy about the occupation and the injustices perpetrated by the Israeli state, which was at that time refusing to acknowledge a Palestinian right to self-determination. But at another level it was difficult for me to deal with the legacies of the Holocaust that had so directly affected my own family and which it was difficult to touch. At the time I was still concerned with 'being normal' and so with being politically involved 'like anyone else' in my generation. I wanted to be part of the present and part of remaking a different kind of future.

As it was, 1968 seemed to be a movement that was without precedent and so without a history. Somehow it imagined itself as coming out of nowhere. It had intellectual sources in situationism and in different movements on the left but it was the shaping of a new imagination that emerged out of the present. There was a sense that the present was somehow radically different from the past and that the predicaments we faced in the present, which did not seem to be the issues of scarcity but rather of urban life and relative abundance, were radically different from the past. We were concerned with creating the present, but not in the image of the past, but rather as an *escape* from the politics of the past. It was through the vitality of the present and the recreation of everyday life that a different kind of political imaginary was to be shaped. But at the same time, there was the echo of a different sort. When Daniel Cohn-Bendit was being deported as a 'German-Jew' from France because of his involvement in the student movement there was a mass student demonstration in which everyone declared 'We are all German Jews'. So at some level there was a

reference to the indignities and murders of the past. The voices of the dead were somehow being heard in the present.

VISIBILITIES

Though I was drawn to feminist ideas around 'visibility' and recognized the ways that visibility was an issue for the Jewish second generation, it took time before I felt safe enough to deal with the inheritances of the Holocaust and years before I was able to write *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity and Belongings* (Seidler, 2000b). If I felt I could belong to the larger student movement I could escape from a sense of precarious belongings. I wanted to belong and somehow felt that I owed it to my parents to do so. They had to endure being marked out by their accents and so being thought of as 'bloody foreigners'. Even if this was not often said to their faces, it was what they were often made to feel about themselves.

The promise of the 'student movement' was a promise of belonging. You could belong as long as you did not draw any attention to your Jewish difference but somehow 'fitted in' to what was going on. You have a voice and a right to be listened to but you soon learnt that you had to talk in universal terms of oppression and liberation. But somehow this was enough and I was ready to pay whatever the price of admission was to be. There was an assumption that Jews had somehow magically all become 'middle class' and so they could be discounted in the larger picture. With time the focus upon class and class struggle became established in ways that somehow disavowed issues to do with 'race' and ethnic differences and it was a universalist framework of 'revolutionary politics' that shaped itself in the early 1970s. At some level there is a resonance with the universal languages of 'communism' that have been circulating more recently in the writings of Etienne Balibar, Nancy and Badiou more recently at a time when issues to do with gender and sexual differences seem to be disavowed – a time of assumed 'gender equality'.

At the same time, in the 1970s and 1980s it was always possible to identify with the universal socialist politics of the Bund and the emerging Jewish Socialist Group. I went to some meeting but aspects of its anti-Zionism left me feeling uneasy. Though I appreciated its sense of Jewish cultural identity and so its recognition that Jewish identities could be separated from religion and framed as cultural identities given the harsh realities of Israeli occupation it felt as if we needed a different framework if we were to open meaningful dialogue for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. But it was also easier to put these issues aside at least for a period of time. At some level this was also to put aside the necessary work of mourning which took form for me in the 1980s. It was interesting to realize how difficult it was to deal with these cultural and political legacies to do with the Holocaust – the Shoah – in psychotherapy and than it was to deal with other issues that could be framed in more traditional familial terms that shaped both psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic traditions that were both used, in their different ways, to trace sources of suffering to unresolved emotional issues within family settings. In the early 1970s some members of the east London group founded Red Therapy and shared a sense that we needed to work on ourselves emotionally if we were not to burn out. This set us apart from other Big Flame groups and gave an added dimension to the ways we framed relationships between psychotherapy and politics. Some interesting reflections on the thinking and prac-

tice of Red Therapy were included in Ernst and Goodison, 1981, and Ernst and Maguire, 1987; see also Seidler (2000a).

We were more involved with sexual politics and now more prepared to engage critically with the practices and imagination of humanistic psychotherapies, which seemed to have made some important breaks with psychoanalytic traditions, particularly in their recognition of the emotional lives of bodies. The ideas, formulated by body psychotherapists such as David Boadella (1976, 1987) and Stanley Keleman (1975, 1979) that bodies 'could speak their minds' opened up different possibilities of working with people emotionally. It also questioned the formulations of a Lacanian tradition that recognized bodies as spaces within which the symbolic would be worked out and so very much within the terms of the unconscious mind as framed through discourse.

But it was with the reassertion of gender politics in 1976 and women in the group insisting that they needed to think in very different terms about women's experiences in the Lesney's plant in Hackney and so escape the terms that were being set for industrial organizing by the Ford group, that the group split and some of the men stayed together as a men's group, which would eventually be responsible for the publication of *Achilles' Heel*, a journal of men's politics (see the work collected in Seidler, 1991b, 1992). But this was to take up threads that had been partly set aside in the turn towards class politics that had shaped the aspirations of Big Flame as a group. It was also to be part of the break up of the national grouping that brought together groups from different parts of the country, including Liverpool where the initial group had been set up, taking the name from a TV programme about a local strike in the docks that was joined by the Ford plant at Halewood.

At some level it feels helpful to tell some of these stories again and to remember what for so long feels as if it has been locked away in an inner space of its own. Though these days of political and community work were intense they were also times of enormous personal growth and learning. It gave us, as students, mainly from middle-class backgrounds, a very different kind of class experience. It allows us to work together with people from different class backgrounds who we learnt to trust as friends and fellow activists. Though we had too easily assumed that the theoretical developments would somehow emerge from the practice more or less automatically, we learned that we also needed times for reflection.

But it also involved questioning the ethics of self-denial that shaped the moral psychology of the times. We felt that we could change as a matter of will and determination. We thought that we could shape our emotions to fit with the political conceptions we had. But this was a form of repression that we were shaping at the very moments that we wanted to escape from an 'internal oppression'. It took time for us to appreciate that we *also* needed to be nourished and that only if we learnt to nourish – and so give ourselves what we needed both emotionally and spiritually – that we could give to others. We had to learnt practices of both giving and receiving.

For some of us this meant recognizing that we might be able to function well in groups but that this could be a form of escape. I know that I worked well in groups and knew how to get what I needed. But at another level I knew that there were other issues I was going to have to deal with, some to do with family histories of the Holocaust, which were referred to in the therapeutic groups we organized, but possibly not really confronted directly.

Somehow the familial frameworks that also characterize post-analytic humanistic traditions made these issues of difference difficult to confront. But like question of gay and lesbian sexuality they would find their way into the present and these became issues for different people to deal with. Probably there is no strict ordering and what emerges emotionally also depends upon issues that are made visible within the larger culture. Somehow we learn to deal with issues in different ways. It is not that we ever deal with issues and never have to return to them, but as with the guiding metaphor of the peeling of an onion, we seem to return to the same places and issues but in different ways and at different moments in our own lives when they seem to resonate or somehow make themselves felt.

The coming of the anniversary around 1968 has itself provided both public and private spaces for reflection. The many issues that were raised in the May 1968 Anniversary Conference 'Psychotherapy and liberation' shows the resonance that these more hopeful days of imagination can still have in the present. They showed the resources that are available from the past, as well as the challenges, which can be important for making a very different present. The world has been shaped quite differently through the 1989 revolutions, globalization and the new technologies of communication. In different ways they have also shaped different vision of democratic possibilities as they have shown the possibilities for different ways of communicating across space and time.

As we remember past struggles they are not lost to us but can find a different place in present imaginations and they can serve as resources for younger generations to learn from both the gains and losses of the past. We can also help by reflecting again on the living experiments that we made and what we learned from them about the possibilities of living and relating differently. As we allow ourselves to mourn for those 'who did not make it' – those who got lost on the way or who died through drug overdoses or other life events – we can dedicate to their memories the hopes of different futures within a more precarious world threatened by new threats of global power and violence and ecological threats of global warming.

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